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SUBJECT: NOT PROTESTING TOO MUCH? IRAQI MFA CALLS IN
TURKISH CHARGE ON CROSS-BORDER SHELLING

Classified By: Deputy PolCouns Kelly Degnan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Following up on press reports that the Iraqi MFA had handed an official note of protest to the Turkish Embassy in Baghdad on June 9, we called June 12 on MFA Head of Department for Iraq Fazli Corman. Corman confirmed that Iraq's MFA Undersecretary Mahmoud had indeed called in the Charge and handed him a note, but was careful to explain that the note was "not a protest as such." Indeed, Corman reported that during their meeting the Turkish Charge asked the Iraqi Undersecretary if the note was one of protest (the note was in Arabic, which the Turkish diplomat cannot read), in which case he would likely have refused to receive it. The Iraqis apparently confirmed that it was not.

¶2. (C) Corman reported that upon translation the Iraqi note was mild in tone, and contained neither language of protest nor of legal or other remedies Iraq was prepared to pursue in response to Turkish military action. As was reported in the Turkish press, the note asserted that the Turkish military shelled several locations just over the border, causing fires and frightening local residents. The GOI asked that such action cease, and reconfirmed Iraq's willingness to engage in trilateral (U.S.-Turkey-Iraq) talks to deal with the PKK issue.

¶3. (C) Despite these diplomatic niceties, however, Corman reported that GOT officials were displeased when, just after this meeting, the GOI released a statement noting that the Iraqi MFA had "protested" the shelling. Corman said this statement was in turn picked up by Iraqi Kurdish media sources -- who also report in Turkish, thus influencing the press here -- who spun the meeting into something more than it was. Corman commented dryly that the GOI did not officially protest alleged Iranian shelling of Iraqi Kurdish territory last year, or at least it was not reported in the press. He reported that the GOT is still considering how to respond -- if at all -- to the Iraqis' note.

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